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A RESTORATION OF THE  
DRAMA OF CANTICLES

(SONG OF SOLOMON)

BY WILLIAM DEARNESS

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# A Restoration *of* the Drama *of* Canticles

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Also an Essay on  
The Calf Cult *of* Northern Israel

By  
WILLIAM DEARNESS

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## FOREWORD

THE notes appended are for the purpose of making clear some local and biblical references and for defending the construction of the present paraphrase, which, as far as possible, avoids any of the questions regarding the interpretation of the book.

The "Song of Solomon" is treated as literature, nothing more or in any way different from what it appears to be at first sight; there is no meaning read into it, neither is it made to favor any commentator's views, however scholarly he may be.

The fragmentary condition of the text called for connective tissue; the heroine was evidently one person, but the different attitudes and the conflicting proposals of the male characters demanded that persons to whom a classification of the speeches would make it possible to assign that which was proper to them, should be discovered.

The translator claims the original discovery of the eunuch or chamberlain; the father of the heroine has never hitherto been brought to light; and the structure as well as the purpose of the last chapter is now for the first time brought into relationship with the rest of the book. Indeed, the destructive school of critics have in some instances proposed the taking of it away from the book, leaving this detached portion to shift for itself, thinking that it is one of the earliest of the "pious frauds" in which an obscure writer endeavors to attach his production to a famous one, and so obtain an unacknowledged immortality.

The translator, in carefully examining the book, untrammelled by tradition, found "Canticles" to be a love story which may have been quite intelligible to those who heard it two

thousand years ago, since they could supply from their own knowledge of men and things much which the writer of the book has purposely omitted on that account.

Whatever measure of success may be credited to this work is, therefore, the result of the labor to rediscover the cast of characters; to give each one his part, and then to develop the story by reasonable supposition, bearing in mind that any Hebraistic drama must be rudimentary in its structure, and, being biblical, artificial situations are inadmissible.

After reading the manuscript before the Presbyterian Ministers' Association of Cincinnati, the writer sent it to Dr. Paul Carus, of Chicago, who pronounced it "very ingenious," but intimated his dissent from the dramatic theory, which he said had been discarded by modern scholars.

Dr. R. J. Cooke, who is book editor of the Methodist Book Concern, of Cincinnati, next examined the work and wrote to the managers of that institution his opinion of the drama: "The writer has undertaken the most difficult of biblical tasks and has accomplished it." Dr. Thorpe, of Pittsburg, perused it during a transatlantic voyage, and, giving it back to the fellow-passenger from whom he had borrowed it, remarked: "I have read it and reread it, and prefer it to the prose version in our Bibles."

The writer, on the invitation of Rev. Dr. Kohler, president of the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, read the work to the faculty and students of that institution, receiving at the close some valuable advice from the faculty, which was taken advantage of without delay.

The manuscript next found its way into the Pontifical College Josephinum, Columbus, Ohio, where Rev. John Molitor, D. D., and Rev. Father Bean subjected language, structure and



translation to a most searching criticism, resulting in several important alterations, all of which were improvements. However, it should be mentioned that Rabbi Feldman, in the Hebrew Union College presentation, while approving fully of the whole drama in all its scope, objected to a paraphrase; while Father Bean expressed his preference for a drama in blank verse, being satisfied with the translation and structure.

Two young gentlemen from Dublin, Ireland, read the drama while on the way to Princeton University and requested that they be allowed to submit it to their instructors, which resulted in a high eulogy from Professor Erdman, commending the poetic diction, but not committing himself to the structure; while Dr. John Davis, finding no fault with the work as a whole, would have preferred a more modern style of versification. Several suggestions and corrections proposed by him were gladly adopted.

But it remained for the Rev. Dr. Berkowitz, of Philadelphia, chancellor of the Jewish Chautauqua, to pronounce on the work so encouragingly as to hasten the determination to publish it.

The following extract from the letter will best exhibit the estimate of the value of "A Restoration of the Drama of Canticles" from the highest Semitic authority with which the writer is acquainted:

I thank you for the privilege of reading the manuscript, and am free to declare that it appeals to me very strongly, in that it brings out so many of the poetical beauties of the "Song of Songs," which the usual literalism utterly fails to discover. The luxuriant oriental fancy overflows in glowing pictures which the prosaic occidental mind rarely appreciates. You are rendering service as an appreciative interpreter of the East to the West. I hope you will succeed. Yours truly,

(Signed) HENRY BERKOWITZ.



## PREFACE

THE youthful reader of the Scriptures might be pardoned were he to complain that, in the sacred writings, adolescent love, so prominent in his mind, is left almost unmentioned, while every nobler and baser aspect of human life is exhibited and discussed.

In the story of Ruth, there is an evidence of passionate love for <sup>her husband</sup> Ornilon in her devoted attachment to his mother, Naomi, when, in such exquisite language, she relinquishes her native land, its religious customs, its social enjoyments and her relationships for those of her departed husband. The story, thus far beautiful in the extreme, suffers from her descent into a commonplace, economic and merely legal union with Boaz, brought about by unconventional scheming, which disappoints the sentimental young reader.

Isaac loved Rebekah, we are told, but wooing and wedding seem to have taken place on the same day. Jacob may have had many delightful interviews with Rachel during their protracted and not uneventful courtship, but not a scene nor word has come down to us. Michal, the younger daughter of Saul, is said to have loved David while, as yet, he was the designated husband of her elder sister, Merab; and when the former had been taken from David after their marriage and subsequently retrieved for him, there is a touch of the melodramatic in the scene where her young husband, Paltiel, weeping as he went, accompanies her as far as Abner would permit him.

Much may be read into the second verse of the first chapter of Hosea, where we have either the command or permission of Jehovah for the prophet to wed the profligate Gomer. It is not

a rare thing for high spirituality to seek its mate with its antipodes. The poet loves a beautiful woman as he loves all other things beautiful, only more so, and he is too generous to fear consequences that harder natures see and shun. Jehovah allows the union to take place, then making use of Hosea's sad experience to tell, as no other man could tell, the love and forbearance, the pity and forgiveness, the expostulations and warnings bestowed by Jehovah on ungrateful, unfaithful and inconstant Israel. But it is not the kind of a love story which delights youth.

Jehovah, in severing the living bond between Ezekiel and "the light of thine eyes," may have extinguished that which had a dawn well worth reading, but again the great purpose is a lesson, and we may not tarry over minor detail when Jehovah teaches. Jehovah wishes Ezekiel to describe the divine bereavement in the loss of his beloved Israel, but the experience of the latter prophet is very different, though the message be similar. The hand that delivers the stroke dries the tears.

In Bible times there was a betrothal period which this book of ours contemplates, and gives us in scene and language all that may be purposely left out of the rest of the Scriptures. But then it is rich in sentiment, expressive in language, warm in affection, and wholesome in its lesson, beyond any ancient or modern love story. That it has been in the thralldom of tradition and withheld so long is a pity, but that misfortune or privation is ended.

# <sup>(1)</sup> **A Restoration of the Drama of Canticles**

<sup>(2)</sup> *The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's*



## **Dramatis Personæ**

SOLOMON.....	King of all Israel
DODAH <sup>(3)</sup> .....	A shepherd betrothed to Abishag
AHISHAR <sup>(4)</sup> .....	Chamberlain to Solomon
ABIMÆL <sup>(5)</sup> .....	Father of Abishag, a man of Issachar
DEBORAH.....	Mother of Abishag
ABISHAG <sup>(6)</sup> .....	The most beautiful woman in Israel
DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.....	Members of Solomon's harem



DATE — Early in the reign of Solomon.



PLACE — Tirzah, a town in Issachar, at one time capital  
of the Northern Kingdom.



TIME — Six days.



## CANTICLES



### First Day<sup>(7)</sup>

*Scene — The royal residence temporarily at Tirzah.*

The heroine is brought into the house where the king with his retinue are sojourning.

At first there is no evidence that she is there unwillingly; she is welcomed by a chorus of women of the harem with real or well-simulated heartiness, to which she responds, acknowledging the high honor conferred upon her.

After the exhilaration incidental to the occasion has in some measure subsided, she contrasts her sunburnt complexion with that of the court ladies, making a poetic apology reviewing the conditions and circumstances of her peasant life, and the Daughters of Jerusalem retire.

Thinking herself to be alone, she indulges in a monologue in which it transpires that jealousy on the part of her shepherd lover has led to a temporary estrangement, and she longs for a reconciliation.

Her soliloquy is overheard by the eunuch of the harem, who is now for the first time introduced to Bible students as the missing link of the drama, solving easily the "enigma" of Old Testament literature.

This character, of whom we have many examples in the Bible, some of them eminent, able statesmen, is sustained in the present drama by Ahishar, who is named, I Kings iv : 6, as the controller of Solomon's household.

Ahishar overhears Abishag, and, true to the description of this class of people all through history, "worships the rising sun" by favoring the favorite and tells the heroine how, in the habit and pursuit of a shepherdess, and following his directions, she may meet Dodah, the man to whom she is betrothed.

Before she can act on this advice, Solomon comes on the scene and is much impressed with her beauty. Judging her taste by that of the other court beauties, he promises her abundance of ornamental jewelry.

According to oriental custom, the latest addition to the harem waits on the king's pleasure at a sumptuous repast; but the languor of an eastern monarch passes into slumber as he reclines; during this space

the heroine in monologue recalls the memories of days passed in the enjoyment of real affection with her betrothed.

Solomon now wakens and again compliments her. Abishag (aside), picturing the delights of rural life, turns to the king and complains that she has been forced into his presence, to which Solomon replies in further but fruitless compliment, and retires, sending in the Daughters of Jerusalem, or members of his harem, to persuade Abishag into acquiescence.

To them Abishag responds in an eloquent eulogy of Dodah, concluding with a passionate appeal to their forbearance.

OPENING CHORUS—"Daughters of Jerusalem."

Oh! let his mouth my lips salute  
With kisses which his love impute,  
That love to which my soul aspires,  
It more than wine my tongue inspires.<sup>(8)</sup>

Like fragrance from a thousand flowers  
Thy choice perfume my soul o'erpowers,  
As oil poured forth with fragrant nard  
Thy name's pronounced with fond regard,  
The virgins love thee fondly, too,  
Resistless drawn thy steps pursue.

ABISHAG (the heroine)—

Into his palace, lo, the king  
His humble friend vouchsafes to bring.

DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM —

Now in thy favor we rejoice,  
Thy love's the theme of every voice,  
That more than wine our song inspires,  
Yea! love our richest note requires,



In uprightness that love's bestowed,  
From righteous thoughts affection flowed.

ABISHAG —

Oh! Salem's daughters, kindly view  
My cheeks that swarthy seem to you.  
Yea! black as Kedar's goat's-hair tents<sup>(9)</sup>  
Or drapery that the light prevents  
In Solomon's environments,  
For burning suns from day to day  
My comely face made darkening prey,  
My mother's sons me drave afield,  
Unfair obedience caused me yield,  
Their vineyards tended while my own  
Neglected lay with weeds o'ergrown.

*(Exit Daughters.)*

*(Abishag soliloquizes and is overheard by Ahishar.)*

Ah! that my soul's loved guest  
Showed where his flocks frequent,  
Where have their noontide rest,  
Thence should my steps be bent.

Why should I grieve alone,  
Veiled from the world and thee,  
Though with their flocks I've gone,  
Thy friends were naught to me.

*(Ahishar discovers himself.)*

AHISHAR —

Fairest of womankind,  
Why so oppressed with care?

Go! and thy love thou 'lt find,  
Surely thou 'lt find him there.  
Follow the flocks' footprints  
On to the camping ground,  
There by the shepherds' tents  
Feeding thy kids be found.

*(Exit Ahishar, the chamberlain.)*

*(Enter Solomon.)*

SOLOMON —

O, my friend, so lithe and fair,  
Like the steeds in Pharaoh's host,  
Grand thy cheeks with braided hair,  
Jewels on thy bust were lost ;  
We'll with gold and silver deck  
Lavishly thy head and neck.

*(Abishag waits on Solomon at table.)*

ABISHAG (*aside*)—

In richest state the king reclines,  
Rare viands his repast compose,  
My spikenard's sweetest smell combines  
With those to charm him to repose.

My absent love is like the vine  
And sweetly smelling copher flower,  
That by Engedi's springs entwine, <sup>(10)</sup>  
To form a grateful, restful bower.

My bunch of myrrh, my henna flower,  
Thy fancied presence cherished still  
Between my breasts till morning hour,  
Shall with delights my bosom fill.

*(Solomon awakes and renews his compliments.)*

SOLOMON —

Behold thou 'rt fair ; thou 'rt fair, my friend ;  
Thine orbs the eyes of doves transcend.

ABISHAG *(aside)*—

My heart a resting place has found  
Where pastures green and flocks abound ;  
There stands a cot of cedars framed,  
And cypress thatched which me has claimed ;  
Such rustic scenes content me well,  
And there my love and I shall dwell.

*(To Solomon, complainingly.)*

A rose, I'm reft from Sharon's plain,  
A valley lily, lone remain.

SOLOMON *(assuringly)*—

Like lily blooming midst the thorns,  
My friend, the Daughters' band adorns.

*(Exit Solomon.)*

*(Enter Daughters, and to them Abishag.)*

ABISHAG —

Better than grandeur of the wood,  
The generous, fruitful apple tree,  
So 'mong the sons my dearest stood,  
The choicest of them all to me.

A grateful shade for me he made  
To shelter from the torrid heat,

Ripe clusters for my wants purveyed,  
Delighted I might rest and eat.

He brought me where the choicest wine <sup>(11)</sup>  
And garden fruits are kept in store,  
He honors did with love combine,  
And strove to please me more and more.

Away with wine! I, fainting, cried,<sup>(12)</sup>  
My heart with love's beyond control,  
The humble raisin cake provide,  
Cool citron may refresh my soul.<sup>(13)</sup>

I languished till his manly arms  
About my person he had placed,  
His left hand soothed my head's alarms,  
His right my fainting form embraced.

Then Daughters of Jerusalem,  
Ye know the timid, fleet gazelles;  
True love is near akin to them,  
Its movements fraud nor force compels.

Then I adjure you, meddle not,  
From love's sweet dream I'd not awake,  
My love can not be forced or bought,  
It's kept for him I'll ne'er forsake.

(END OF FIRST DAY.)

### Notes on First Day

(1) "*A Restoration of the Drama of Canticles.*"

The dramatic theory having been exploited, a mere mention of the others is all that need be made.

It has been conjectured that the book is an eclogue in which some shepherds on a festive occasion vie with each other in improvising love songs. Again, it has been set down as an idyll of pastoral life in the North. Then another supposes it to be an epithalamium celebrating the marriage of the daughter of Pharaoh to Solomon; while yet another supposes it to have been a poetic drama performed on some occasion for her delectation.

But the extreme of destructive criticism holds that the book exhibits all that remains, and that in defective fragments, of the love songs which the swains of the North chanted in the ears of the fair, who do not seem, in that view of the case, slow to respond.

(2) "*The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.*"

The title is variously understood to mean: The best of songs, or a song composed of little songs by Solomon, or regarding Solomon. The title verse is not a part of the original text, and the ascription of the authorship to Solomon is unwarranted.

The scribes, who maintained the popular view regarding its authorship, assign "Canticles" to the youth of Solomon, "Proverbs" to his mature years, and "Ecclesiastes" to his cynical old age; accordingly we have them grouped together in the canon, and they appear so in all translations of the Bible.

But in modern Hebrew bibles, the book is placed with "Ruth," "Job," "Esther," and "Lamentations," as part of the "Megilloth," or five rolls appointed to be read at the sacred anniversaries, "Canticles" being appointed for the Passover celebration.

The story of its transposition is interesting; for one thing it is the occasion of the earliest mention of the book. The rest of the Old Testament contains no references to it, neither is it mentioned by Philo, nor Josephus, although both must have seen it in the canon, and have read even the Greek translation made by the "Seventy," in Alexandria, about 250 B. C.

However, at the first assembly of Judaism after the Dispersion, held at Jamnia, A. D. 90, a proposal was made to exclude the book from all copies made of the Bible in future, probably on account of its scandalous misuse by the convivial Jews of Alexandria, the pious judging that the Eternal would not have suffered this profanation of the book had it been His very word.

At the critical moment, the revered R. Akiba exclaimed: "Peace and mercy! No man in Israel ever doubted the sacredness of the 'Song of Songs.' All the ages can not compare with the day when the 'Song of Solomon' was given to Israel. All Kithubim is holy, but the 'Song of Songs' is the holy of holies." Immediately the sentiment of the Assembly was unanimous for its retention, and the honorable place mentioned above assigned to it.

The book is not even noticed by the most distant allusion in the New Testament, but perhaps it may be indicated in the "many little songs" referred to by Jesus, the son of Sirach, in the Apocrypha.

A number of superficial commentators have coupled Psalm XLV with the book, but there is nothing in common between the silent, yielding and gorgeously appareled bride of the psalm, and the eloquent, independent and sunburnt peasant girl of Issachar.

(3) "*Dodah.*"

Readers of the original need not be reminded that the term of affection used by the heroine to her suitor or betrothed is *Dodah*, which might with propriety have been spelled *David*, only for the confusion of persons which would result.

If "Canticles" had been a product of modern dramatists, the drama would have been rendered sensational by an invention, in which the sentence of death on Adonijah had miscarried, when, fleeing to the north, he outgenerals the wisest and most powerful of kings.

For the historical incident see the note on "Abishag."

(4) "*Ahishar.*"

From I Kings iv:6, we learn that was the name of the ruler of the household of Solomon. Probably in the establishment of an extensive harem, Solomon followed the custom of all oriental magnates, and so fulfilled the warning of Samuel (I Samuel viii:15).

Readers of history are well acquainted with the part some of those persons have taken in national as well as in household affairs; mutilated and, therefore, in great measure deprived of the play of the softer and gentler passions, they have given themselves to diplomacy and philosophy, and have often been chosen to high honor in God's service, as Daniel, the three companions he had, Mordecai, and the chamberlains in charge of the Hebrew princes while in preparation for services in Nebuchadnezzar's household. The treasurer of Candace and traditional apostle to Abyssinia may also be instanced.

However, in the same individual there was often displayed the extremes of fidelity and treachery, as occasion might suggest. In the drama, some of the peculiarities of this class will demonstrate themselves.

The attempts to dramatize "Canticles" have hitherto failed on account of the obstacles interjected by this, as then undiscovered, participant. Yet his presence and identification are quite plain, now that the traditional one character of either sex has been overcome. Commentators tardily acknowledge the discovery of a rival to Solomon, but even with the additional character, much that was impossible remained to be disposed of, and, disheartened, the dramatizer declared his disbelief in the dramatic theory.

The passages which are unintelligible, unless by the introduction of this character, are chapter i:8, where the soliloquy of the heroine is replied to by one who directs her how and where to find her shepherd lover, and certainly this speaker can not with consistency be the king, and of course not the shepherd himself: the speaker is one with the entree of the household and not quite loyal to his master. In chapter iii:8, the women of the household ask some man regarding the approaching demonstration on the pasture lands, and receive in reply particulars which one in the position of chamberlain could best give; but he supplements the information with an order that no man but one in his position might give: "Go forth! ye daughters," is his command.

But no doubt remains regarding his identity when the seventh chapter is reached, if one emerges from the fogs of tradition and frees himself from the unwillingness to investigate. The speaker in that chapter is not the king, for he speaks of the king in the third person; nor is it supposable that the timid and retiring shepherd would take the part, or even be present, on such an occasion, for even the descriptive phrase of

the king's point of observation shows that the entertainment was wholly for the king's gratification, and under the direction of one well accustomed to the display to the highest advantage of female charms, without being greatly impressed.

Solomon admires the heroine superficially; the shepherd admires her appreciatively; the chamberlain professionally.

The writer, in the discovery and placing of this character, believes he has solved this biblical enigma, and has thereby been enabled to give to the Bible reader a readable book.

(5) "*Abimael*."

The choice of this name for the father of the heroine is, of course, wholly arbitrary, and the word means, in a general way, a godly father.

The Sabbath-school graduate has been taught, in an offhand way, that when the act of secession took place, then Northern Israel became idolatrous and hopelessly bad; a view of the case colored by the priestly author of the books of the "Chronicles."

While the record is true of the state establishment of a forbidden mode of worshipping Jehovah, through a mistaken policy discussed elsewhere in these notes, it is also true that the activity of the voluntary ministers of religion resulted in better moral conditions among the common people than obtained in the southern kingdom, where piety and morals rose and fell with the will and disposition of the king.

Ezekiel says plainly that morals in Israel were not half as bad as they were in Judah, speaking of the two kingdoms under the figure of two sisters (Ezekiel xxiii:11 and xvi:51); "Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins."

This note is in defense of the invention of a godly man as independent as he is intelligent, an inflexible and brave "David Deans."

There are no parallels in the sketches of northern affairs to the great woman of Shunam, generous and thoughtful for the comforts of the prophet; to the dutiful and wise little maid of Israel in the household of Naaman, the leprous Syrian; no man of Shalisha appears in Judah with his timely offering to supply the needy servants of God. Take away Amos, and the country districts of Judah are without a prophet. Truly there are no parallels in the records of Judah. Where is there one, outside the sphere of prophetic enthusiasm, equal to the stalwart martyr,



Naboth? Then take the hundred faithful prophets sheltered by Obadiah, and the seven thousand who did not conform, as the populace of Judah must have done when an idolatrous king succeeded to the throne, but resolutely refused even the slightest act of courtesy towards the image of Baal.

The promise had to be fulfilled through the expiatory offerings in Judah, but the Scriptures are plain in saying the election of that remnant is wholly of grace, and not through deservings.

The pivotal action of the drama turns on this last introduced character who knew the Torah and practiced its precepts, teaching in word and example until wonderful strength of character is developed in his daughter.

(6) "*Abishag.*"

A surmise has been expressed by eminent English and German scholars that the heroine of "Canticles" was none other than the beautiful young nurse of the aged and infirm King David, to whom she was neither wife nor concubine. (See I Kings i:4.)

After the death of David and accession of Solomon, and as a sequel to the attempt of Adonijah to seize the throne to the exclusion of Solomon, we have the awful visitation of the wrath of the king on the aspirant to the hand of his father's nurse. In this request Adonijah was wholly innocent of a conspiracy, although commentators, both Jewish and Christian, are unanimous in perceiving treason that is parallel to the request of Abner for the concubine of the deceased Saul, or of the incestuous Absalom in his appropriation of the harem of David, on the occasion of the rebellion of his beautiful but bad son. Abishag was not a member of the king's establishment, and so the doctrine, that to assume the late king's harem was proof of rebellion against the new king, is without foundation. Besides, it is only on the stage that conspirators publish their purposes.

The court favorite had prevailed on the mother of Solomon to prefer his suit, which she undertook with apparent unconcern for the consequences. A harmless and handsome young man falls in love with a beautiful woman, who, being attached to the household, is in the gift of the king. Women are not averse to such an office as that pressed on Bathsheba. But consider her well. The granddaughter of Ahithophel,

that wonderfully wise counsellor of David; she was the treasure-house of the folklore displayed afterwards by her son in his once popular "Proverbs." Solomon goes farther and credits his love of wisdom to her in the same book. In politics, it is not wholly improbable that she schemed as much as David was susceptible, at her first appearance; she obtained from David the promise that her highly trained son should be his successor; a contrast to the dilettante Adonijah, the real heir, and to Absalom, the rebel, who attempted the throne and who was partially and temporarily successful.

Nathan, the prophet, was her ally and counsellor, and depended on her astuteness at the critical time when the opera bouffe assumption of Adonijah was in process of celebration. That such a coward could be a conspirator and that such a woman, mother and queen, would further such an undertaking as the dethronement of her son, are considerations unworthy of the time they occupy. Solomon ordered the execution of Adonijah on the plea of the latter's disloyalty. This blot on the early administration of the wisest of kings indicates that the monarch was himself the victim of the master passion described by himself (Proverbs vi:34; xxvii:4): Solomon was jealous.

The autocrat was in love with Abishag, and, believing that her preference was for his half-brother, he takes the short method of oriental despots, and, justifying himself by the hollow pretense which, as has been said, continues to deceive men that ought to know better, he judicially murders Adonijah.

Neither the victim nor the assassin seems to have been the choice of Abishag, and she returns to her native Issachar and to the object of her early affections. Solomon follows her shortly afterwards, as the number of his harem (120) indicates, the complete number being 1,000, and the "Song of Songs" tells the rest of the love story.

(7) "*First Day.*"

Wetzstein, who was consul at Damascus, representing Prussia about the middle of the last century, tells of his having been present at a wedding feast in one of the rural districts of Syria, the feast lasting a week.

A kind of drama, in which a king and queen with their attendants take parts, was performed, the dialogues celebrating the triumph of virtuous love.

The threshing-floor was used as an audience space, while another and raised part was used by the actors, prompted by the communal priest, who was credited by the visitor as having shrewdly adapted the poetic drama to the situation, in order to forestall amusements and conversation of a baser character.

(8) "*It more than wine my tongue inspires.*"

Antecedent to the present perfunctory administration of the Eucharist in Presbyterian congregations, the services began some days previous to the celebration, with a day of fasting, humiliation and confession of congregational shortcomings; another day the congregation were in general reminded of the principles contended for to the extremes of torture and even judicial murder, and then the congregation one by one passed under the scrutiny of the Church Session, the acceptable being handed a "token" of admission. But on the forenoon of the Communion the utmost effort was put forth to arouse the spirituality of the membership in an "action sermon," usually a chef-d'œuvre of doctrinal exposition and incitement to Christian enthusiasm. Then followed the solemn appeal to the conscience of the intending communicant to sit in judgment on himself and so spare himself, if facts unknown to the approving Session would make it damnatory for him to come to the long and linen-decked table to which the communicants were invited. The table being furnished with guests, the elements were uncovered and consecrated, the words indicating less than the Lutheran but much more than the Puritan doctrine regarding the "real presence." But the addresses before and during participation, and continuing for a little space after, would form an anthology excelling all that one has ever listened to in that spiritual exaltation corresponding to the exhilaration of wine. Some of those sacramental addresses have been preserved, notably those by Williston of Dundee, one peculiarity in most all of them and their kind being the free use made of the "Song of Songs," fragments being made wholly subservient to the fancy of the preacher, no established system of symbolism obtaining. In fact, the Church of the New Jerusalem alone has a fixed basis of application of the figures of speech used throughout the book.

(9) "*Kedar's goat's-hair tents.*"

The nomads whose territory lay indefinitely south and east of Palestine; any Arab tribe of primitive times.

(10) "*That by Engedi's springs entwine.*"

How would Engedi, among the mountains of Judah, suggest itself to this daughter of the North and an habitue of the Plain of Sharon? This most fertile glen, with its luxuriant tropical vegetation, was one of the haunts of David during his adventurous youth. Did David speak of it in his glowing poetical language reminiscently, so as to make Abishag so appreciative of it that she associates the place and its scenes with the rich memories of her lover?

(11) "*He brought me where the choicest wines.*" (He brought me into his banqueting house.)

In another note it has been stated that the book had become scandalous from its desecration. One is impressed with the saying (Ecclesiastes i:9), "The thing that hath been shall be." The agreement of all reverential commentators is, that the fiftieth year of the independence of the North is the date of "Canticles," which brings us to the wine feast of King Elah, with its fatal termination. A wandering minstrel, with a hairy garb and carrying the harp such as revived the spirit of Elisha afterwards, and was powerful in the hands of David, both in his dealing with the gloomy Saul and in the composition of the only devotional songs worthy to be classed as such, may have intruded—a welcome contributor to the festive monarch's convivial joy—and to him may have been recited and sung the only love story in Scripture afterwards.

(12) "*'Away with wine,' I, fainting, cried.*"

Those critics who are unable to perceive remote antiquity in any portion of the literature of Israel, have not been inconsistent with themselves when "Canticles" was their subject. The extremists of this school affect to see the influence of the Greek drama on the book, urging that the Hebrews took no pleasure in the contemplation of the beauties of the landscape, and were insensible to the tender passion antecedent to marriage.

For converse proof of this let us examine that fragment of "Sappho" which Joseph Addison, England's most eminent literateur in the eighteenth century, has rendered into verse:

Blest as th' immortal gods is he,  
The youth that fondly sits by thee,  
And sees and hears thee all the while,  
Softly speak and sweetly smile.

'Twas this deprived my soul of rest,  
And raised such tumults in my breast;  
For while I gazed, in transports tost,  
My breath was gone, my voice was lost.

My bosom glowed, the subtle flame  
Ran quick through all my vital frame;  
O'er my dim eyes a darkness hung,  
My ears with hollow murmurs rung.

In dewy damps my limbs were chilled,  
My blood with gentle horrors thrilled,  
My feeble pulse forgot to play,  
I fainted, sunk, and died away.

Taking the whole episode narrated by the heroine of "Canticles," one wishes that Addison had done as much for it as he has done for the fragment given above. The candid reader would have decided that the Bible scene excels the Greek in being free from artificial and fanciful expressions, while in spirit it is equally fervid, yet simple and natural.

In point of fact, the Bible poem gives evidence of originality, and, in the conflict of claims, evidence would be on the side of "Canticles" as being the model and "Sappho" the imitator.

The critics take for granted that poetry and art were indigenous to picturesque Greece, apparently ignoring the fact that the earliest poem of Greece is its greatest, the luxuriant efflorescence of a vigorous plant in a new soil.

Since Greek literature sprung up when Hebrew literature had matured, who can tell the story of the possibility of the Phœnician merchants, who had, before the age of Homer, doubled Cape of Good Hope

and traversed all Southern Europe, even crossing the English Channel. On one occasion a ship of those merchant people carried the first foreign missionary on a most adventurous trip on the Levant, and that missionary, too, from the North, where we have been led to believe no good thing dwelt; yet Jonah was from the very scenes of "Canticles." The literature of Israel — the richest, purest, highest and most natural — was doubtless spread far and wide through the medium of those commercial adventures. The love of nature they could carry with them, and the habit of adorning language with poetic imagery they could convey, but they never carried but one who could instruct in the knowledge of God, as one, immaculate and indivisible. Phœnicia had no such holy mission, and Israel's prophet undertook it unwillingly, so Greece might receive her taste from Israel, though her monism would be unwelcome.

(13) "*Cool citron.*"

The Hebrew word, *tapuach*, may mean any fruit of the character of the apple — pears, plums, peaches, apples, apricots, oranges, lemons or citrons. The apple of Palestine is poor in quality, and would hardly serve the purpose of the speaker in this instance.

The "Targum" refers to the citron as cooling and refreshing, while in I Samuel xxx:12, a cluster of raisins is given to the faint Egyptian fugitive to relieve his exhaustion.

## Second Day

*Scene — The dwelling of the mother of Abishag.*

The heroine tells the daughters of Jerusalem of her experiences after leaving them the night before, describing the early morning of this day and the approach of the betrothed to her mother's house, as if she were but now seeing and hearing him.

She describes his bashful and affectionate movements, after she has portrayed in the most animated language his agility and rapidity in approaching the town. Being assured of a cordial reception, he breaks forth into song, alluring her to flight, in a most poetic picture of the free and flourishing fields in the springtime. However, he is made aware of the impracticableness of his plans and concludes his admirable song by a determination to return to his vocation until the time shall be more propitious.

She recites her reply to him, urging him to return that same evening, to which, in the light of the next day's narrative, he presumably agrees; and the second day, or division of the drama, closes with a repetition of her appeal to the good nature of the "Daughters."

ABISHAG (*to mother*)—

My loved one's voice I hear,  
So resonant and clear.  
Behold he breasts the mountain ridge;  
Look how his steps the hills abridge,  
Like wild gazelle from ledge to ledge,  
He leapeth void of fear.

He stands behind our wall  
And fain my name would call,  
But eager, bashful, hopes to see  
Me through the casement casually;  
Now through the lattice glanceth he,  
How rich his accents fall.

My loved one me invites,  
To follow him incites;  
"Oh! rise my fair one, come my love,  
Through meadows and by woods we'll rove,  
The sunshine shall to pleasure move;"  
A song to me recites. '

*(Enter Dodah, singing a song of springtime.)*

DODAH —

The winter's past, the rain has ceased,  
The song birds chaunt their wooing,  
Sweet smiling flowers the spring's released,  
And turtle doves are cooing.

Green figs are ripening on the tree,<sup>(14)</sup>  
The vines the air perfuming;  
Arise my love and come with me,  
My bride in beauty blooming.

My rock dove, spread thy glittering wings,  
And fly the haunts of strangers;  
The lofty state but envy brings,  
And rank is full of dangers.

Oh! let me see thy countenance,  
Thy voice, Oh! let me hear it;  
Thine eyes would gladden with a glance  
My heart, thy words would cheer it.

Adieu! I hasten to protect  
Our vines, the foxes foiling;  
Our tender grapes must not neglect  
To little foxes' spoiling.



ABISHAG (*to Dodah*)—

Beloved! Beloved! My heart's wholly thine;  
Where flocks 'mid the lilies thou'rt feeding,  
Them, into safe keeping, I pray thee, resign,  
And back to thy darling be speeding.

When breathes from the mountain the breeze of the eve,  
The summer day's heat is abating;  
Returning, thy bride to thy bosom receive,  
Where patiently thee I'm awaiting.

Oh! turn thee to me-ward, beloved, return,  
Come back o'er the mountains of Bether; <sup>(15)</sup>  
Like th' agile gazelles which all obstacles spurn,  
O'er the mountain of spices come hither.

(END OF SECOND DAY.)

### Notes on Second Day

(14) "*Green figs are ripening on the tree.*"

Lest there should appear some incongruity in this celebration of springtime, the reader is reminded that the word *pag* means the figs which attain full size too late for ripening the same year, but about the season of the "Passover" would afford a grateful refreshment to the passing traveler. This accounts for the disappointment of Jesus on His way from Bethany. The time of figs had not yet come, but the wayside *pag* should have been ripe and ready for such a distinguished partaker of its fruit.

(15) "*The Spice Hills—Bether, Besamin.*"

The interchange of rendering is based on the etymology of *mala-bathron*, in which the termination is made interchangeable with "Bether"—separation. As it is impossible at the present day to locate Bether, the play on words is of no consequence to the reader.

## Third Day

*Scene — The royal residence in Tirzah.*

Abishag opens with an address to the "Daughters," relating her experiences of the intervening night, in which the delay of Dodah in keeping his appointment has alarmed her; so, leaving her mother's dwelling, though after nightfall, she proceeds to search for him, and finds him without much effort.

In the language of the preceding days, she again begs the forbearance of her audience, but is interrupted by the exclamation of one or more of the daughters in the form of a question, as a cloud of dust indicates the approach of a cavalcade or caravan. The answer, given by some man well acquainted with the persons and purpose of this demonstration, fixes assuredly the personality of Abishar, the eunuch in charge, any other character being an impossibility.

The heroine, after this scenic approach of Solomon, evidently staged with the purpose of impressing her, is again chosen to wait on him. Solomon exceeds his former sensuous admiration, affection being unperceivable in his address to her. She makes no reply, and the chagrined monarch, tired from the morning's state function of royal progress, intimates his intention to retire to a suburban retreat.

An episode tells of her return to her mother's dwelling where she again meets Dodah, whose declaration of admiration and affection for her is in such striking contrast to the language of Solomon that the fact of there being two aspirants for the hand of Abishag is unquestionable.

Warning the heroine of the dangers of her situation, Dodah urges flight at the earliest opportunity, probably immediate; but the subsequent narrative to the daughters indicates his withdrawal without her.

ABISHAG (*to Daughters of Jerusalem*)—

By night, upon my couch, my fancy strove  
And thought to find my love, but found him not;  
Then Love about the city bade me rove,  
So through the streets and broadways him I sought.

"I'll rise and find my love," I had replied,  
"I'll find him whom my inmost soul adores ;"  
I sought him, but I was success denied ;  
I found him not my saddened heart deploras.

The watchmen, following their nightly round,  
I questioned: "Have ye seen my soul's true love?"  
Me, wandering, distressed, indeed they found,  
But naught replied, nor once to help me strove.

'Twas but a little I had from them gone,  
When lo! my ravished heart became aware  
My eyes with rapture once more looked upon  
The form of him beloved beyond compare.

I held him fast, nor would not let him go  
Until my mother's house I brought him to,  
Where she, who purest nuptial love did know,  
Might, sympathetic, my distresses view.

Then, Daughters of Jerusalem,  
Ye know the timid, fleet gazelles ;  
True love is near akin to them,  
Its movements fraud nor force compels.

Then I adjure you, meddle not,  
From Love's sweet dream I'd not awake ;  
My love can not be forced or bought,  
It's kept for him I'll ne'er forsake.

*(Enter Ahishar.)*

(Solomon, returning in state, is described by Daughters, who,  
addressing Ahishar, enquire —)

DAUGHTERS —

What caravan excites our eyes,  
Who stirs the dust upon the waste,  
Like smoke clouds mounting to the skies,  
Who comes thus in impetuous haste?

Already borne upon the breeze,  
Frankincense loads the luscious air,  
Spices and myrrh the senses please  
With merchants' perfumes rich and rare.

AHISHAR (*in reply*)—

Even Solomon, our king, draws near,  
His royal litter greets the sight,  
Three score around it, armed, appear,  
All sons of Israel, men of might.

These, Israel's champions, trained to war,  
With sword and buckler ready dight  
They watch, intrusion to debar,  
Prevent surprises in the night.

This palanquin King Solomon,<sup>(16)</sup>  
For royal progress, forth hath brought;  
Its wood was hewn in Lebanon,  
Its pillars, silver richly wrought.

Its rests consist of plates of gold,  
Its cushions, purple silk o'erspread,  
Jerus'lem's daughters' loves are told  
In many a panel, pearl inlaid.

Go forth! ye Zion's daughters, see  
Your king, he wears that regal crown  
His mother gave, when, joyfully, he  
The power of nuptial love did own.

*(Enter Solomon.)*

SOLOMON (*addressing Abishag*)—

Behold! thou'rt fair, my friend, thou'rt fair,  
Thine eyes, like doves' behind thy locks;  
Like goats', thy wealth of raven hair,  
From Gilead of the royal flocks.

Thy teeth, like ewes, new washed and shorn,  
In pairs most regular, complete  
Thy lips, like scarlet lace, adorn  
Thy comely mouth in speech right sweet.

Like pomegranates among the leaves,  
Thy locks thy temples half conceal;  
Thy neck supremest fame achieves,  
Where grace and strength themselves reveal.

Like David's towers, embattled where  
A thousand champions shields display,  
Thy neck might richer trophies wear  
Of conquests higher far than they.

Like young gazelles, thy breasts, a pair,  
Their timid graceful forms repeat,  
Or, feeding 'mong the lilies there,  
Retiring, find a safe retreat.

*(Solomon's address failing of effect, he intimates his intention to retire to his lodge outside the city.)*

Cool, comes the evening breeze,  
Lulling to soft repose,  
Odors the senses please,  
Myrrh the near hills disclose.

Calm night spreads o'er the hill,  
Savors frankincense yields;  
There will I rest until  
Morning the orient gilds.

*(Exit Solomon.)*

*Scene — The mother's house; evening.*

*(Enter Dodah, the shepherd.)*

DODAH *(to Abishag)*—

Thou'rt fair o'er all, my love, thou'rt fair,  
Immaculate, no blemish there.  
Oh! stay with me from Lebanon,  
My bride, from dangerous Lebanon;  
Adventure not Amana's height,  
Nor Hermon's steep and snowy site;  
The Eastern Senir's cliffs beware,  
The lion has his dwelling there,

The mountain leopard there is found,  
Beasts strong and merciless abound ;  
Yet, better were thy death with them  
Than life which faith and love condemn.  
But courage let my heart regain,  
My kindred bride, thou'lt mine remain ;  
My heart was thine, when on me shone  
One glance, I then was all thine own.  
Thy neck, which chains of gold sustained,  
As with one link, my heart enchained.  
My kindred bride, thou'rt fair, how fair !  
Thy love surpasses vintage rare,  
And varied spices fail to please,  
When thy perfumes my senses seize.  
Thy lips are honeycombs in song,  
Honey and milk are 'neath thy tongue,  
Sweet flowers, of Lebanon the boast,  
Are in thy fragrant presence lost.  
Thy virtues, barred from royal wile,  
Like garden walled and watched the while,  
Like fountain in the palace court,  
Enclosed from all the vulgar sort.  
Like garden plants, thy graces grow ;  
Like pomegranates, ripe fruits bestow ;  
Spikenard and henna, saffron flowers,  
Frankincense whose perfume o'erpowers.  
With calamus and cinnamon,  
And chief of spices every one,  
So myrrh and aloes, which combine  
Salubrious virtues, all are thine.

A fountain, many gardens, thou  
Refresh shalt with thy heart's overflow ;  
Thy virtues, inward grace propels,  
Like Lebanon's perennial wells.

*(The hour is late. Dodah hastily exit, and Abishag singing in continuation of his eulogy.)*

ABISHAG —

Awake, north wind! Awake!  
Thou south wind, softly blow,  
Breathe on my garden, make  
Its spices forth to flow.  
Its fruits right rare,  
Profuse and fair,  
Invite thee there,  
Their sweetness to bestow.

*(Retires and dreams that Dodah is calling her.)*

(END OF THIRD DAY.)

### **Note on Third Day**

(16) "*This palanquin King Solomon.*"

The reader may have noted the number of Solomon's bodyguard, and have failed to be impressed with a sense of grandeur. Can it be that this is cynicism, where the writer, by a clever movement, exposes the parsimony of Solomon, following it up in the last chapter by an exhibition of mean, oppressive penuriousness as an offset to the glowing accounts of his magnificence and lavish expenditures given in Chronicles?



## Fourth Day

*Scene — The royal residence at Tirzah.*

The heroine tells of a sweet, erotic dream, which she says was broken in upon by the return of Dodah, seeking readmission, as probably the city gates had been shut for the night. She affects reluctance, pleading that she has retired and reminding him of the unreasonableness of his request.

However, pity overcomes her unwillingness, and, relenting, she rises to admit him. In true oriental style, she ascribes her nervous incapacity for complying with his request to the overpowering influences of the odors of rich perfumes, augmented by a sense of his personal attractiveness.

Recovering herself, she opens, only to find that he has departed, and at once she sets out to find him. She describes her treatment by the watchmen of the city, and implores the sympathy and assistance of her audience.

In somewhat disdainful terms, they want to know the reason for this romantic attachment, and enquire regarding his personal appearance and worth.

They receive, in reply, the much admired eulogy, the effect of which is to win them over, and they declare their willingness to assist her in finding him, meanwhile proposing that she furnish some conjecture as to his whereabouts. This is answered by another outburst of affectionate attachment; then the king enters to renew the prosecution of his suit.

Solomon now reaches a higher plane in his declarations, after he has exhausted his stereotyped comparisons, and proposes offering her undivided and unlimited authority, as Queen of Israel. There is no reply recorded.

*(Abishag narrates her dream to Daughters.)*

ABISHAG —

“Bride of my kindred, lo, I’m here,  
Here in our garden, spouse most dear,  
Gathered my myrrh with balsams sweet,  
Honey with honeycomb we’ll eat ;

Drink with our milk, our choicest wine;  
Eat, O, our friends, our joys combine,  
Drink! yea, dear friends, abundantly;  
O, my beloved, drink with me."

I slept, but this delightful dream,  
In thoughts delicious, waked my heart,  
And love, the ever welcome theme,  
Did joy unspeakable impart.

'Twas then that tapping at my door  
Me woke, and then I heard him speak:  
"My kindred bride, than dove more pure,  
Behold, I needful shelter seek.

"My locks are wet with drops of night,  
Nocturnal dew my body chills;  
Have pity, heed my doleful plight,  
And save me from impending ills."

"I have put off my coat," I said,  
"How should I put it on again,"  
"I've washed my feet," I further pled,  
"Why them defile?" I made complain.

My well belov'd the door then tried,  
My heart was moved with pity then,  
I rose, the door to open wide,  
Mine own betrothed to entertain.

But, sweets surprising everywhere,  
My nerveless hand made helpless prey,  
My hands, suffused with oil of myrrh,  
And fingers on the bolt delay.

I opened then, but all too late,  
My loved one, grieved, had turned away ;  
My soul had caused me hesitate,  
Had failed me when I should obey.

I sought him, but I found him not ;  
I called his name, with no avail ;  
The watch me found, and sore me smote,  
The keepers reft away my veil.

Oh! Salem's daughters, I adjure  
You, tell him, if my love you find,  
I'm sick beyond all earthly cure,  
Despair with love of him combined.

DAUGHTERS (*in response*)—

What's thy beloved more than those  
That grace this city, fairest one,  
What virtues rare in him repose,  
That us such charge thou layest upon?

ABISHAG (*in reply*)—

White and ruddy's the complexion of my love,  
And his temples hold what's richer far than gold ;  
Then his ample locks my admiration move,  
Black as raven's are his ringlets to behold.

His eyes, as washed with milk, are clear and bright,  
As the pigeon's varied plumage, is their sheen.  
As the brimming streams, the turtle doves invite,  
So, his looks to me refreshment still have been.

Like sweet balsam is his healthful, honest smile,  
Like to banks of sweetest herbs, his bearded cheeks ;  
Then most pure and aromatic all the while,  
Like the lilies, are his lips, as truth he speaks.

As a cylinder of gold's his arm and hand,  
Which the topaz, for a setting, might desire ;  
Like carved ivory his body's sinews stand,  
To be worthily encrusted with sapphire.

Like the marble work of master of his art,  
On plinthæ of gold his limbs were fitly seen ;  
Like Libanus in his manly noble port,  
As the cedar excellent and ever green.

His speech with sweetest sentiment is stored,  
Of ten thousand, bears the banner worthily,  
Yea, he's altogether lovely, my dear lord,  
O, ye Daughters of Jerusalem, is he.

DAUGHTERS (*in reply*)—

O, fairest thou of womankind,  
Where's thy beloved gone ?  
With thee we'll seek, perchance may find  
Thy loved, thy absent one.

ABISHAG —

My loved one to his garden went,  
To scan each spicy bed ;  
Him ripest fruits their sweetness lent,  
While chaplets decked his head.

My loved one's mine, I'm his indeed,  
In mutual trust unmoved;  
His flocks in Sharon's pastures feed,  
'Mong lilies where we roved.

*(Exit Daughters.)*

*(Enter Solomon.)*

SOLOMON —

Oh! my friend, supremely fair,  
Tirzah I'd with thee compare;  
As Jerus'lem, glorious queen,<sup>(17)</sup>  
So thy countenance is seen.  
Terrible to me alway,  
As an army in array,  
Are thine eyes, turn them aside,  
Them my soul dare not abide.  
Now, again, I say, thy hair  
May with Gilead's goats' compare.  
Like a flock of well-washed sheep,  
So thy teeth their whiteness keep,  
Perfect, shapely, all in pairs,  
Not one space their ranks impairs.  
Neath thy locks, but partly seen,  
Like pomegranates mid their green,  
So, thy temples, I descry,  
As retreating from mine eye.

Three score queens, acknowledged mine,  
Four score, ranked as concubine,  
Virgins, numberless, are there,  
In my palace great and fair;

Thou, my dove, shalt reign alone,  
Thou, thy mother's most loved one,  
Crowned the queen of all the land,  
Thou shalt sit at my right hand.  
Thee the Daughters saw and blessed,  
Queens and concubines confessed  
All thy grace and virtues rare,  
In thy love they'd gladly share.

*(Proposal rejected; exit Solomon.)*

(END OF FOURTH DAY.)

#### **Note on Fourth Day**

(17) "*Jerusalem, glorious queen.*"

The phrase is taken from the Book of Tobit.

Jerusalem, like Edinburgh, owes its existence to an impregnable rock fortress, and both are picturesquely situated; but the romance of history is immeasurably in favor of Jerusalem. Economically, there is nothing in favor of the establishment of a metropolis in either place. Neither is on a military or commercial highway, so neither has advantages for manufactures, yet both are thriving cities at the present time. The pen, and not the loom, has been the prime factor in their prosperity. Both are loved for their literature, but no city can ever be loved and pitied as Jerusalem is, and has been for thousands of years. Jerusalem has called forth praise from divinely inspired poets, and it has been lamented in unapproachable dirges of distress. Its future glories have inspired millions with comfort and hope, and its reverses formed the great concern of Jesus on His way to the cross. When the last of the seers goes beyond his natural powers to describe the abode of the immortals — purified, enlightened and glorified, redeemed beyond the power of the enemy and restored beyond the possibility of relapse — the crowning figure of speech is "New Jerusalem."

And such a history! Breaking upon the student's vision as the "City of Peace," governed by a priest of the Most High God, it retires from view for a thousand years, to reappear as the stubborn, unassailable Jebus, defying all the attempts of Israel to reduce the stronghold of Zion, and deriding even the successful David, to whom its rulers sent a message, intimating that they had placed a guard of blind and lame men to resist his assault.

Reduced by David, he endeavored to have it renamed after himself, but was unsuccessful in that ambition. Solomon made it the richest, and then the most famous, city in the world, inviting the avarice afterwards, as it did at the time the admiration, of surrounding and even far distant nations.

Since then it has been the cynosure of the eyes of civilization, and many millions expect it to be the capital of a peaceful world, where a king shall reign in righteousness. Peace! after fourteen recorded sieges, and annihilation three times repeated.

There is a rabbinical story regarding its ruins after its overthrow by Hadrian, A. D. 135. Two rabbis were visiting the sacred and loved ruins, when one, moved to expression of the deepest sorrow, repeated the lament for Zion and the inextinguishable love of Israel for her, in the words of Psalm CXXXVII. The other skipped from one pile of rubbish to another, uttering the praises of Jehovah in selections from the most triumphant of the Psalms. Looking between the mists of tears, the distressed one marked the unseemly levity of the other, and remonstrated with him. The other replied, "Hast thou not read and hast thou not taught that Jehovah is faithful to His promises? He warned us of the destruction of Jerusalem, and lo! His word is fulfilled; He has promised a succeeding glory which I know He is more determined shall come to pass. If judgment is God's strange work, and it has been accomplished, much more shall restoration, in which He delights, be assured."

## Fifth Day

*Scene — The royal residence at Tirzah.*

Solomon relates his own experiences, stating that at early morn he had gone forth to pursue his botanical studies, going to his garden at the foot of the hill upon which Tirzah was built.

He tells that quite unexpectedly he is confronted by the beautiful Abishag, probably in simple garb, and so he fails, at first, to recognize her.

But the influence upon him of the lovely Shulamite is more intense than even before, and he declares himself wholly overcome by her charms.

The attendants, becoming aware of the king's plight, and recognizing her, demand that she return to await the king's pleasure.

She replies that she is fleeing from his presence, and intimates her inability to contribute to the king's happiness.

They reply that she can and shall minister to his gratification by performing a sensuous dance in his presence, which takes place that same day.

The dance being concluded, she is placed in the custody of Ahishar, who lavishes compliments on the personal loveliness of the nude performer, but the language is that of a connoisseur of female perfections and attractions; the part is only possible for the eunuch in charge of a harem.

The favor, extended at the outset to Abishag's preferences, is repeated when the shepherd is allowed admission into the presence of the heroine, after the king has taken his departure.

Abishag entreats Dodah to provide for her escape, picturing to herself and to him the happiness which their freedom promises. Thus far the eunuch, Ahishar, has tolerated their love-making, but he can not allow their flight, so Dodah retires to the country.

SOLOMON (*to Ahishar*)—

My footsteps, in the morning hours,  
I turned towards my cherished flowers; <sup>(18)</sup>  
The walnuts I went forth to view,  
The valley fruits examined, too;



My vines obtained observant care,  
Which budding pomegranates did share.  
A vision I, amazed, beheld,  
My courage felt completely quelled,  
As if surrounding chariots came,  
All driven by men of martial fame,  
As army marching to the fight,  
So terrible upon my sight.  
The morning ne'er more fair did show,  
The sun did never brighter glow,  
The moon no clearer beams displayed  
Than did this fleeing peasant maid.  
Attendants spoke, I stood appalled ;  
"Return, thou Shulamite," they called.<sup>(19)</sup>

She spoke : "I safety seek in flight,  
I would avoid the royal sight ;  
What would ye with the Shulamite?"

"Return," they cried, "thou, void of shame,  
Thou'lt dance for him the Mahanaim."<sup>(20)</sup>

*(The dance is performed in the presence of the king, after which Abishag is addressed by Ahishar, the chamberlain.)*

AHISHAR —

Thou princess of Beauty, in dancing today,  
Thy light springing footsteps thy sandals display ;  
Perfection of motion thy thigh joints convey.  
More graceful thy form than by sculptor designed,  
More glorious than gold, with rare jewels combined ;  
Thy form, most voluptuous, the wine jar suggests, <sup>(21)</sup>  
Well filled, as thy vigorous motion attests.

Thy zone, like a band of bright lilies, appears,  
Confining the sheaf with its treasure of ears ;  
Thy breasts, like the twins of the graceful gazelle,  
Retreating from sight in retirement to dwell.  
With tower, built of ivory, stalwart and fair,  
Thy neck, in its structure, may fitly compare.  
Thine eyes, clear and liquid, like Heshbon's deep  
pools, <sup>(22)</sup>

Betoken the stronghold intelligence rules ;  
Thy nose, like Libanus, lifts proudly on high,  
Like fortified slopes, which Damascus are nigh ;  
Thy head, like Mount Carmel, most shapely, rich  
crowned,  
With purple of kings, should its tresses be bound.  
E'en the king, set on high, in its bondage was held,  
Indignant he came, but his anger was quelled.  
How fair and how pleasant, delightful thou art,  
To me such enjoyment might almost impart.  
If thou wert a palm tree ambition sublime  
Would urge me to gather thy fruits, I would climb.  
Like clusters of Eschol's, thy luscious twin breasts ;  
Thy breath, the aroma of apples suggests ;  
Thy speech is like wine of a vintage that's choice,  
Gliding smooth, even the sleeper is charmed with  
thy voice.

*(Enter Dodah, perceived by Abishag.)*

ABISHAG —

Cease, flatterer, cease ! my loved one's here ;  
I'm his and his alone.

Come forth, my love, the night draws near,  
Afield let us be gone.

The villages, our rest, invite ;  
Then, early waked, we'll rove,  
The budding vines shall please our sight,  
Pomegranates bloom our love.

Oh! that thou wert a brother dear,  
My mother's suckled, thou,  
That I had chanced to meet thee here,  
I'd kiss thee here and now.

Then none might ardent love despise,  
I'd lead thee to our home ;  
My mother might our course advise,  
Our teacher she'd become.

Then wine, well spiced, I should bring forth  
Of pomegranates sweet wine ;  
Thy left hand should my head support,  
Thy right my form entwine.

Oh, Daughters of Jerusalem!  
Your friendly pleadings cease,  
My love can not be moved by them,  
'Twill rest until it please.

(END OF FIFTH DAY.)

## Notes on Fifth Day

(18) "*I turned towards my cherished flowers.*"

The rabbis say that Solomon was on speaking terms with all nature, but whether or not he be the author of this book, it is certain that the writer loved the country, for the names of twenty-one plants and of fifteen animals occur in it.

(19) "*'Return, thou Shulamite,' they called.*"

Eusebius, in the fourth century, and most modern geographers, identify the names Shunem, Sulem, Shulaem, and Shulam, with the location in Issachar associated with Abishag, and also with the great woman who took such good care of Elisha.

(20) "*Thou'lt dance for him the 'Mahanaim'.*"

There is diversity of both taste and judgment in the treatment of this word, some preferring the obscurity of the prose translation, while most of the readers of this manuscript justified the writer in the use he has made of it.

(21) "*Thy form, most voluptuous, the wine jar suggests.*"

The writer makes no apology for softening the asperities of the original, only too faithfully translated in all our versions. It may be argued that the very coarseness of the text proves its integrity and antiquity, yet there are other and higher considerations which all the examiners of the manuscript have admitted to be paramount. It is not prudery to render the original in the most conventional language which may convey the idea fully, instead of clinging to a verbal exactness, which is really not any more explicit. That the text is poetry, not history, should be kept in mind.

This chapter and some passages towards the end of the fifth, induced the rabbis to place the book along with those prohibited to youth under thirty, and the reader even then had to wash his hands after its perusal.

(22) "*Heshbon's great pool.*"

Remains of this reservoir are yet visible, but the insertion of *fish* in the author's version is gratuitous. The versification turns on a play on the etymology of "Heshbon"—intelligence. There being no trace of

Bath-rabbim in either the traditions or remains of the place, no use is made of the name in this versification.

Heshbon, eventually a Levitical city, was situated on the boundary between Reuben and Gad, east of Jordan, occupying an elevated site.

A fragment of an Amorite song preserved in Numbers xxi should interest Bible readers.

In defense of the play on the word "Heshbon" it may be adduced that Amos (viii: 1-2) does the same in the original, where orally "Ketz" may mean either "the end" or a basket of summer fruit, and so frequently in the Bible there are sacred puns.

## Sixth Day.

*Scene — An orchard.*

The Daughters, accompanied by Abishag, are abroad, and, looking over the adjacent pasture lands, perceive the approach of a venerable pair, giving evidence of conjugal affection. The heroine recognizes her parents, and all go to meet them.

The father (Abimael) now for the first time appearing in the drama, recalls the circumstances of the birth of Abishag to her, and tells of her early and effective training.

Solomon has followed and, entering, is at once addressed by Abimael on the philosophy of the affections. The king listens respectfully, even while the heroine rather taunts him with her treatment, and here the reader is referred to the enigma of the little sister, which yields at once to dramatic interpretation. From some personal knowledge of a phase of Solomon's character, not elsewhere recorded, Abimael proposes a ruinous ransom for Abishag, which the spendthrift king accordingly accepts, and the love chase of King Solomon ends, as it began, with little credit to the monarch.

Abishag now invokes the presence of Dodah in song. He arrives, and the pair take their departure in the spirit of a triumphant chorus.

Rural love has mastered court attractions. The whole-hearted and rich-minded Dodah has defeated the sensuous and unsentimental Solomon.

If Ecclesiastes be the work of Solomon, then we may judge what he means when he laments: "I have found among the thousands of my courtiers a man whom I can love and trust, but among the thousand of my harem, not one congenial soul." The murderer of his half-brother, Adonijah, for the sake of Abishag, is rewarded in Abishag's determined preference for a peasant.

### CHORUS OF DAUGHTERS —

Across the meadows, journeying hence,  
Who are this pair our eyes descry?  
His shoulder bears, in sweet suspense,  
Her resting arm most lovingly.

*(Enter Abimael, who addresses Abishag.)*

ABIMAE —

Beneath yon apple tree, whose shade,  
Thy mother, kindly hiding,  
Her newborn infant helpless laid,  
To father's care confiding.

*(Enter Solomon, and to him Abimael.)*

Since then, in right and wisdom's ways,  
Her youthful feet directing,  
So diligent, in lapse and strays,  
Reproving and correcting.

Oh! happy she whose father's words  
Upon her heart retaining,  
As seal to wax its stamp accords,  
Clear and unchanged remaining.

As on the arm the bracelet shines,  
Its gems undimmed, unwearing,  
My counsel love with truth combines,  
The wearer's worth declaring.

For willful love might lead to death,  
And jealous men are cruel, <sup>(23)</sup>  
When hot as Sheol's burning breath,  
Distrust provides the fuel.

But love that's true is like a flame,  
Lit by Jehovah's spirit,  
Nor floods can quench or drown that same,  
Nor waters' waste can wear it.

For love like this proposal's vain  
Of wealth or kingly dwelling;  
True love such offer would disdain,  
It's worth all else excelling.

Her sisters undeveloped breasts<sup>(24)</sup>  
Proclaim her years yet tender,  
When coming years may find request  
Made for her like surrender.

Then Truth shall fence her like a wall,  
With silver towers commanding,  
And Virtue barricade her shall  
From tyrants' lusts' demanding.

ABISHAG —

A wall indeed did me surround,  
My breasts like towers defending,  
That day I favor with him found,  
And dangers were transcending.

ABIMAEL (*resuming to Solomon*)—

Thy vineyard at Baal-hamon yields  
A thousand silver pieces  
From each who occupies thy fields,  
And lives by their increases.

From vineyard that's before me spread,  
Oh! Solomon, I'll yearly  
A thousand pieces give instead  
Of her I love so dearly.



Two hundred for the dressers pay,  
Of finest silver pieces,  
Then hence, content, will take our way,  
When her thy hand releases.

*(Abishag, after Solomon consents, sings.)*

ABISHAG —

Oh! happy the vine dressers list to thy song,  
I fain would its melody hear ;  
Oh! why dost thou tarry, thy absence prolong,  
Oh! when will my loved one appear.

*(Enter shepherd.)*

GENERAL CHORUS —

Then hasten, we'll flee like the hunted gazelle,  
The spice hills are chiding delay ;  
In love that's connubial forever we'll dwell,  
We'll hasten ; we'll hasten away.

CURTAIN.

### Notes on Sixth Day

(23) "*For jealous men are cruel.*"

Abimael may at this point refer Solomon to his arbitrary and cruel treatment of Adonijah.

(24) "*Her sister's undeveloped breasts,*" etc.

The writer congratulates himself in being able to present this passage in an intelligent form and connection, for the first time in its modern history.



## CONCLUSION

When the "Song of Songs" had been irremovably remanded to the canon, in A. D. 90, at Jamnia, the dictum of R. Akiba being accepted apparently unanimously by the assembled rabbis, the allegorical interpretation brought into vogue by Philo, two centuries previous, was at once applied to it; although that scholar was perfectly well acquainted with the canon as a whole, he makes no mention of this book, a circumstance rather remarkable. The rabbis perceived in its erotic language the love of God for Israel, the bride of Jehovah, as in Jeremiah ii:2, or Isaiah lxv: 5, and her appreciative response, although in the masculine gender, as in Hosea ii:15-17; or they understood the speakers to be God and the soul.

The "Targum" says of the book: "It is the history of Israel from the Exodus until the time of Messiah;" but many distinguished Jewish scholars are unwilling to admit any interpretation of the book, preferring to view it as a collection of fragments of popular love songs, an anthology purely secular.

Its first appearance in Christian literature, for it is not even traceable in the New Testament, is in the ten-volume commentary which Origen, in the earlier half of the third century, is said to have written. As might have been expected from a man of his bent, he accepts the allegorical interpretation, the book being, in his view of it, a dialogue between the Christ and the church. A century later, Theodosius of Mopuestia ventured the opinion that the book was purely secular, encountering no hostility at the time; but a century still later, when the Nestorian controversy had resulted in the fixing of the phrase "Mother of God" into the theology of the orthodox church, the very zealous perceived the Virgin Mary in the female character, and at the Council of Constantinople, A. D. 553, the defunct Theodosius was cited to appear for trial, and, as usual, spiteful ecclesiastics, readier to close the gates than they are diligent to keep them open, excommunicated the bishop, with what results will never be known.

The "Breviary" and "Missal" of the Latin Church both exhibit that interpretation now, but the notes to the Douay Bible indicate a preference for Origen's view, which is the prevalent one in the Teutonic and Anglican bodies.

Both Catholic theologians (Bossuet and others) as well as Evangelical, including Lowth, have accepted both the literal and allegorical character of the book as the basis of their expositions of portions of it.

Fanciful applications of all and of parts of the book, of no special importance and therefore omitted here, have appeared from time to time, but the most curious adaptation of it to a situation that the writer has met with is to be found in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, in the story of "January and May," told by the merchant, the characters being "January," an old and blind husband, and "May," his young and too gay wife. As there are reasons why it would be better for the wholly modern reader to acquaint himself merely with the extract rather than with the whole story, it is given here at length :

"Rys up my wyf, my love, my lady free,  
The turtle's vois is herd, my douve swete,  
The winter is goon, with alle his reynes wete,  
Com forth now, with thyne ey'en Columbyn.  
How fairer bene thy brestes than weyn  
The garden is enclosed alle aboute,  
Com forth my whyte spous; out of doubte  
Thou hast me wonded in myn hert, O wyf!  
No spot of thee, ne knew I all my lyf,  
Com forth and lat us taken our disport,  
I chese thee for my wyf and my comfort,  
Swiche olde lewed wordes used he."

On account of Chaucer's satires on the religious orders, he is ranked with the Lollards of the fifteenth century, but whatever he says opprobriously of the regular clergy is fully counterbalanced by his fine portrait of a faithful, generous and sympathetic secular priest. However, there are those, and no mean authority either, who claim that the poet had Wyclif in mind.

But the reason for inserting the above quotation is to show that the allegorical interpretation was not exclusive prior to the Reformation, and it seems somewhat paradoxical that the cry of "Private Judgment of the Word of God" practically excepts this book.

## **The Calf Cult of Israel**



## The Calf Cult of Israel

The purpose of this short treatise, and its being appended to the dramatization of "Canticles," is to induce a more generous spirit in the hearts of Bible readers when their minds may chance to contemplate the shortcomings of Israel. Possibly the reader, were he to compare carefully and conscientiously his own compatriots and co-religionists with the denounced "House of Israel," might find but little grounds for congratulation in conduct of life, doctrine or devotions.

**H**OW far religion can tolerate within itself an admixture of error in its doctrine and in its devotions without entirely failing to effect religion's good influences on the conduct of the worshipper, it may be impossible to determine.

There is no religious system worthy of the name which has remained unchanged from the time of its promulgation. Judaism had its Sadducees and Pharisees, later its Karaites; and in modern times it is divided into the Orthodox and Reform, which parties are nearly as hostile as were the Samaritans and Jews towards each other. That Christianity is not primitive in any exercise of its faith is a charge easily established by taking the word of any one unimpeachable body against all others.

It may be pleaded that improvements have been introduced in superior methods or more esthetic forms of worship, but change as such is manifest; radicals work for it, conservatives oppose it and moderates guide it, but come it surely does.

Yet there should be some recognized test by which every innovation might be measured, whether that change be the modification of something already approved of, or the introduction of that which is wholly new. That test should determine the value of the proposed change as a factor in augmenting

morality, intelligence and benevolence, while sentimentally producing the humble and contrite heart, the desideratum of all religious activities. If the proposed change is merely an exhibition of restlessness, if it be a whim born of sentimental dreams, or if it be merely traceable to that admiration of the beautiful which defies bounds and rules, then religion will resolve itself into a matter of personal preference, the deceived worshipper will imagine that God is being adored, when only his own mental vagaries or love of the sensuous is being gratified.

That worship and doctrine which induces candor between a man's conscience and himself, thus leading him to acknowledge insufficiency in service and inconsistency of conduct, will be productive of the ideal citizen, the freeman who in all future history will insist on his rights, as his fathers in that faith have done before him.

Even a casual reading of the prophets, Hosea and Amos, will enlighten the inquirer regarding the influence of the bovine cult on Israel. Pride, sensuality, oppression and injustice were everywhere; moreover, such priests as Amaziah, the antagonist of Amos, were apologists for the situation, against the patriotic protests of those prophets who remained faithful; but they were too few to be effective, the mass of them, on the relaxation of the persecution incited by Jezebel, becoming the sycophants of Ahab and his successors, and celebrating that form of worship which the Almighty declared an abomination, although directed to Him and not to any foreign deity.

The curse of hard labor on a race bearing the mental and spiritual image of the benefactor of mankind, that curse diverting the mind from the knowledge of God as much as it also alienated the heart, might well appeal to the fountain of mercy



to the extent that he would either by revelation to the mind of the best of the race, or through the instrumentality of a heavenly messenger, instruct suffering man to transfer the weightiest of his burdens to the shoulders of a docile, patient and strong animal; further that the propitiatory or expiatory idea — its outgrowth — would be deemed acceptable to the Great Benefactor, and offenses cancelled, when in acknowledgment of unworthiness and profession of gratitude, in the simple erecting of an altar or stage of earth or rough stones and in the burning of all or part of one of these animals thereon, the worshipper would, for the time being, be assured of the good will of God; further, the frequent act of communion between God and man would be blessed towards the advancement of man in goodness and truth, and the faded image of God in the heart should by those simple means be restored.

Yet further, that when the flesh of man's devoted servant should be made the substance of social rejoicings, the invocation of God on the feast should be instrumental in keeping pure the social relations, and of producing an invincible nation, when the increase of mankind made such an association together for mutual protection and advancement necessary.

Immediately the bovine would suggest and represent the goodness, compassion and mercy of God, and the animal would be therefore honored and precious.

This state of mind towards the animal may in some measure account for the great herds of cattle which formed the non-negotiable wealth of the Mesopotamians. Their wool, camels and asses they might exchange for silver and gold or ornaments for the person, for tents, or the spicery of the traveling merchants, but there was no account to which the immense herds of cattle could be turned, the plundering of nomads and the

domestic and sacrificial consumption being all that would keep the numbers in check, except we take into account the depredations of wild beasts. Travelers in India tell of the sacred cow of that country which, geographically considered, is the natural depository for a traditional respect for this great boon to man.

Naturally the earliest efforts in art of a religious people would be devotional in spirit, and the form which was so suggestive of the welfare of the race would be the first rude product of the primitive sculptor. Inspired by the warmest and loftiest sentiments while in the realization of the mental concept, the result would be something which would be the admiration and wonder of his less laborious and less thorough, and not so entirely committed, neighbors, who regard in all ages a special exercise of divine endowment in the artist, and in ruder ages we may perceive a *doulia*, as theologians term the respect paid by the wise men to the infant King of the Jews, accorded to the work of art, rather than the *latria*, payable only to God. In Judaism, the looking to the brazen serpent led to its adoration six or seven hundred years later. So the transition from the respect paid to the totem of Mesopotamia to the adoption of it as a means of worship directed to Jehovah was a natural one, especially when we see in our day, and in all history, how a thoughtless mankind are ready at all times to praise or blame the most proximate factor or agent as the original source.

Israel knew very well that the commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods with me," meant something different from that containing the phrase, "before me," and they obey the former now to the letter. No gorgeously clad peasantry nor effeminately visaged divinity in stained glass diverts the rude nor disturbs the cultured, thus setting a good example to other systems of religion; but it took seventy years of exile and a

bosom friendship of the Medes and Persians to cure them of the artificial in public worship.

It will assuredly be remarked that much of the foregoing is conclusion reached through conjecture, but all is not a bow drawn at a venture.

Having thus discussed the origin and purpose of the bovine cult, it is our purpose next to trace its history in Israel. Although it was Mesopotamian in its origin, and was carried into Egypt by the assailants of that country coming from the North-east, yet both in the former and latter countries it ill represented the rapacity of an invading army, and as we see in the Assyrian sculptures, it was conjoined with the parts of more warlike animals; also, the boasted philosophy of the Euphrates territory with its wisdom of Teman, and its astrology of Chaldea, took their part in the frequent man-faced composition. The reader is referred with all reverence to the visions of John and of Ezekiel, from which he may draw his own conclusions if he so prefers; the writer feels sure that the four-facing cherub of the gate of Paradise, having descended by tradition independent of the account given by Moses, furnished the national emblem of the winged bull or lion or man-faced animal of either kind. Benevolence figured in the bovine was insufficient, so the proud man and vindictive lion, as well as the rapacious and swift eagle, were conjoined. As we shall see further on, Israel was not free from this later invention which, with them taking the cue from the Mesopotamians who had migrated to Aram, they utilized as a household arbiter of luck and foreknowledge of the event of undertakings.

The statement is ventured here that wherever in the Bible there is mention made of a molten and (a) graven image, then the calf or young bull or heifer is indicated, whereas in all

passages reading "strange gods," the teraphim is intended, as indeed it is in the original, and is so distinguishable from "other gods," signifying the deified powers of nature worshipped with grossly immoral accompaniments.

The ordinary run of Bible readers would stigmatize the subject with a single word if an inquiry into the origin, the significance, the purpose, the character and the insufficiency of the calf cult were proposed. The simple term, "idolatry," would be used and the subject dismissed, the truth being comparatively easy of demonstration — that the same mistake regarding the worship of God embodied in the calf is present in the devotions of every congregation of worshippers today, more or less. The worship of God by any other means than that appointed in His word is of the exact character of this cult of Israel.

First, as to its origin. The apostle Paul enumerates retrospectively the mistaken notions of those who conceive in their minds an idea of the divine being and bring that idea forth into bodily form. In his day it was a man that represented God, and the religion of his times actuated sculpture, and later painting, to the limits of human ability in producing perfect models of the human body, which were used to incite mental conceptions of the appearance personally of the gods. Paul's next point of view shows the four-footed beast, the bovine cult of earlier times, that in its turn descending to serpent worship, the earliest of all and perhaps pre-Adamic.

The first notion of an unseen being whose province lay in the forces of nature would be of a malignant power whom it would be wisdom to propitiate, and the appearance of this form would be suggested by the serpent, which was the most insidious and deadly enemy, concealed yet ever present, wise and differ-

ing in its appearance, habits and motion from any other animal within man's knowledge.

The enmity of the unseen he sought to propitiate with gifts, for he knew that his serpent enemy when satisfied would hide away from sight and for a while give no more trouble. Gifts to the unseen enemy which inflicted ills of tempest or climatic extremes, animated the attacks of wild beasts, or laid pitfalls in his way, even frustrating his efforts to obtain the spoils of the chase or the fruits of the ground, must be bought off, and the devotee knew of no way by which acceptance could be so accurately measured as by the self-denial exercised by him in giving whatever he valued most; so that in Bible story, as well as in mythology, we have the remains of this demon worship, as the apostle properly terms it, finding victims in instances of desperation in the offering by a man of his firstborn son.

But the advance to a cult which adopted the bull as its symbol is more than a mere change of idols — it marks the advent of a new concept of the unseen being, and is dependent on the revelation or tradition of God, and man's relation to Him in the position of His benefactor.

Perhaps the difference in knowledge of God was the difference between the primeval race and the Adamic; the former a gross and sensual being, hardly, if at all, responsible, the latter a living soul. The former doomed to extinction, but meanwhile striking its moribund fangs into the heart and life of the sons of God, according to the Scriptures, thoughtfully read and liberally interpreted.

The first mention in the Bible of a forbidden system of worship is in the case of Laban's teraphim, a domestic sooth-saying implement, stolen by Rachel in her elopement with Jacob, and concealed by her among the baggage on which she

was seated. However, it should be noted that Joshua (xxiv : 2) reminds the people of Israel in his parting address that Terah of old served "other gods," and the rabbinical account of the "call of Abraham" resembles the story of Gideon's treatment of Baal (read Judges vi : 24-32), but the nature of the Chaldean worship, judged from other sources, is more likely to have been the adoration of the heavenly bodies than the setting up of a symbol of divinity, though the calf may have been their racial totem, for in our day the totems of clans and nations drawn from historical or mythical circumstances are not always objects of worship. Although the peculiar relationship of the Alaskan to his totem pole be quite spiritual, yet one can not say so much of the lion of England, the bear of Russia, nor the thistle of Scotland and shamrock of Ireland, all emblems and historical landmarks, with much more meaning than the displayed arms of an archbishop or the quartered shield of a petty German prince.

Whatever place the calf emblem had in the worship of monists previous to the going down into Egypt, there is incidental proof that the Apis, brought into that land by the Semitic dynasty which favored Joseph, was used as a means of worship by Israel in that country. The revelation of the name of Jehovah which was accompanied with the assurance that He was the God (Elohim) of the patriarchs prior to the twelve, would be meaningless to them did they not know Him to be a spiritual being, and they must have had a traditional knowledge of His dealings with the fathers. At the time of the birth of Moses the midwives are said to have "feared God," and in godly fear had the courage to obey the dictates of conscience, rather than the command of the king to destroy all the Hebrew male children; but again the accusation in Ezekiel is that when God

proclaimed his intention to deliver them from Egypt the Israelites did not cast away the abominations of the eye, but defiled themselves with the idols of Egypt. This accusation is repeated in a distressing figure of speech in another part of the same prophecy.

Nothing further can be gathered from direct history nor from the retrospect of the prophets; so the next standpoint is at Sinai, where the people demand Elohim to go before them through the wilderness. The first thought induced in the mind of the reader would be, that the god desired, seeing that all divinities of that age were looked on as tribal or national, could not be one of the Egyptian deities; but here again the dynasty of the shepherd kings has been superseded, and the naturalized god might not hold a place as local divinity in Egypt now that "a king had arisen that knew not Joseph." Consistently enough they might reason that the spirit of the emblem of the Northeast would lead them back to the land where the object of worship was that of the fathers. Now the apostle Paul lays it down as an axiom that where there is no law there can be no transgression, but Israel had received this command to abolish the representation of God; the narrative gives it, and the Psalms and prophecies assert it, before the second ascent of Moses to the presence of God on Sinai, so that it was done in the face of a positive prohibition fresh in the minds of all, the argument from this latter being that such an open, unanimous, defiant transgression points to a custom of long standing and general practice. The record shows that Aaron yielded to their demand—evidently they knew of his proficiency in this art—and requesting their gold ornaments, a large collection was made which he melted on an open hearth, then watching the pool with its pelagian streamlets for indications of

success, or auguries of the approval of the unseen, or as in subsequent divination finding out the thing indicated by the shape taken by the molten metal as it lay on the ground, he concluded that the powers were favorable, and that the shape of the metal indicated the hide of the sacred emblem. He then carved a core of wood and covered it with the gold, making a molten and graven image, which the people recognized as the exact thing they had wanted — the Elohim of Egypt, hitherto or till within a week or thereabout, tolerated in the worship of El-Shaddai, the god of their fathers. Aaron appoints a feast to the newly revealed, self-existent, the “Will Be” in whose presence Moses had been presumably swallowed up, and a shameful orgie next day took place, which even the mixed multitude abstained from and derided.

The punishment which followed was sufficient to deter any further attempt to combine the gratification of the body with devotion of the soul, and the Israelite who was weary of obedience to God in a prescribed form of worship, fell back on the astrology of the more thoughtful of his forefathers, who, observing, admired, wondered at and then worshipped the heavenly bodies, preparing their hearts and minds for that apotheosis of the planets which among all the civilized peoples of antiquity, from the Amorites to the Romans, was the basis of the grossest immoralities in social life, and these religious rites became the snare to the sensual among the future inhabitants of Palestine.

When the conquest of the land was practically, though not thoroughly, achieved, Joshua commanded the people to put away the teraphim from among them, but the mention of a graven and molten image does not occur; of the former there will be notice taken in discussing that form of mistaken devo-



tion, but there is, without doubt, a reappearance of the bovine cult on the occasion of Gideon's victory over Midian. The national voice was in favor of making him king, which honor he refused, and now comes a passage which, as it stands, is wholly unintelligible. Gideon invites the victorious Israelites to the dedication of the jewelry which they had taken off the persons of the Midianites, and the confederate Ishmaelites, who delighted in ornaments of gold worn in a barbaric form. With evident prepense and preparation, accountable only to some prevalent consent, either traditional or of continued observance, he melts the gold, and, the text says, of that made an "ephod," which is evidently a mistake of the transcriber, and although commentators have striven with determination amounting to bigotry to uphold the integrity of the original text, asserting that an ephod could be made of cloth of gold or embroidered richly with gold thread on a linen fabric, yet the idolatry of Israel never could be paralleled in either former or subsequent times with this worship of an apron. Nations have some connecting link between the means of worship and the being adored, but where is the divinity of idea in the apron? The solution is given in part by modern scholarship in brief form, that the transcriber wrote the word we have, instead of Elohim. Of course the "verbally inspired" school protest, but what a Bible reader wants is understanding of the text, not a meaningless verbiage. Gideon declined the honor and responsibilities of monarchy, but to consolidate Israel he produced the ancient symbol of the nation, and that central point where it was placed was designed by him as a rallying place, where, under the "old flag," as modern patriots would express themselves, Israel would be unified, instead of the fortuitous and atomatic condition of things obtaining hitherto. Israel, instead of utilizing

the symbol, as an Irishman would the shamrock, or a Russian the bear, the one a memento of religious unity and the other of civil combination, went further, and paid to the symbol the devotion due to the object and cause, as the highly but unconventionally figurative language expresses their conduct, the fact being that sensuality does follow in the train of this kind of devotional disobedience.

Somewhere about a century later, we have the record of Micah, who dedicates some silver which he had retrieved, to the making of a molten image and the domestic teraphim, and then the robbery of the "whole outfit," using a most expressive and therefore allowable slang; the tribe of Dan leave the divinely allotted territory, invade a peaceful settlement, and install a form of worship in the newly named city, which continued until the Captivity.

By some oversight wholly unaccountable, this clause has been overlooked by every commentator who has written on Judges. The key to Israel's calf worship under the kings of the North is furnished by this clause, for which see Judges xviii: 30. Not only so, but the identity of the calf with the phrase "molten and (a) graven image" is here established. The student who takes this view as his will find many obscurities clarified.

And now comes the "Sin of Jeroboam," which has puzzled many a one who has applied the word idolatry with inconsiderate generalization.

What was there in this cult which infatuated the kings of Israel to their own destruction, and to the incurring of God's disfavor on the nation?

The answer may be gathered from the foregoing. The calf was not an invention of Jeroboam, neither was it an Egyptian

god which he had learned to worship while he was a fugitive in that land, and had married a princess of that land; in truth, that Egyptian woman had become a convert to the religion of Israel, as her interview with the prophet Ahijah leads us to infer; she had reared a godly son, a circumstance incompatible with an idolatrous household. True, Jeroboam had seen this bovine image in that land of Egypt, but it is very likely that but little respect was being paid to it, and whether or not the plain statement is, that Jeroboam being confronted by a most difficult situation, namely the autonomy of the state coupled with the division of the church, or perhaps if stated conversely it might be plainer: how was he to divide the tribes, or sever the ten from the two politically, while annually they united in the celebration of an allegiance from which alone they believed the state to hold authority? The record is that Jeroboam "took counsel."

Doubtless "the men of Issachar who had understanding of the times and knew what Israel ought to do," sketched the religious condition of the ten northern tribes and deduced therefrom a policy.

"We have," they would say, "a minority who already are religiously independent of the South, and have no sympathy with the lavish and formal display of the temple worship." Even the founder of the dynasty, David himself, had discounted the inward effect of this outward and expensive magnificence, saying, "Sacrifice and burnt offerings thou requirest not, but the sacrifices of God are a broken and a contrite heart." These pious people assemble on some hilltop in a secluded place, and there, confessing sin, make an atonement on the primitive earth altar, and afterwards join in a social feast on which the blessing of Jehovah has been invoked, while some

member of those brotherhoods instituted by Samuel, called "Sons of the Prophets," instructs the gathering in the law of Jehovah. They are few in number, but the best of our people, and the real source of that spirit of independence which renounced that rule and oppression of the South which enjoyed everything but contributed nothing. Jehovah must be acknowledged, but their form of worship was never popular and never designed for a national celebration, for it is both exclusive and serious in appearance to the outside observer. On the other hand, the popular trend is to Dan, where the ancient Mesopotamian totem is still resorted to, with its fortune-telling teraphim; the thoughtless and ungovernable resort to that place, we have the conscience of the former to consider, and the customs and traditions of the other, with the addition of their unreasoning superstition. The toleration of the former, with the patronizing of the latter, on a basis satisfactory to both, is our problem; and as the majority will always be the national or calf party, we can please them and take our chances with the minority, the Puritans.

The silver calf image in Dan we shall supplement with a gold one, thus flattering the prejudice of the common peasantry, while to forestall any danger from great popular gatherings at the extremity of the nation's territory, where the lawlessness which gave inception to the settlement, may still give character to it; besides, to divert the half-hearted to a locality traditionally sacred, we shall establish another national symbol at Bethel, where decency and respectability will sustain the state cult.

The gold calf was captured and carried to Assyria by Tiglath-pileser before the captivity, so that the original calf of silver outlasted it, but the one established at Bethel was re-

moved to Gilgal, as far as we may judge from Hosea's expostulations, and ten years later taken by Shalmaneser.

Having thus sketched the history of the cult, as well as endeavoring to explain its fundamental principle or underlying idea, the next question is, what was the mistake, or wherein lay its offensiveness to Jehovah, and how was the national character demoralized and the nation weakened by this cult?

Categorically, one might answer that it was a form of worshipping Jehovah wholly unauthorized and therefore forbidden and offensive.

The principal fault lay in the taking from a secular use an emblem and then employing it in a sacred use without authority, God, who knows the heart, being the best judge of how it may be brought into relationship and accord with Him.

Then it was a looking back. God had winked at this while ignorance prevailed, but now He had manifested His name, His glory and His authority, and the national slogan given to Moses was, "Go forward." Returning to the beggarly elements was the threatened danger of the early church, and Judaism today is rising in protest and warning against this retrogression of mind on the part of her people, who fail to hear the voice of God in the world's forward march.

But reading between the lines, first taking the celebration at Sinai for information, there was no confession of sin, no abasement of heart and in consequence there was no provision for atonement. The prophetic cult in the North was strong in this particular and was therefore the strength of the nation. But when Ephraim sinned in Baal, then he died. The same passage tells of the transition through the calf cult to this debasing and destroying celebration of the sensual in human nature,

the exaltation of animalism over the spiritual, until animalism itself is left behind in their detestable orgies. Every fraternal order, every association for ethical culture, every esthetic club is on the level with the calf cult, in that their ritual for worship in all cases ignores the existence of guiltiness before God. In consequence, the reformations in Judah which began with humiliation for personal, social and national sins, had no place in the calf cult, and the charges brought against Israel by the faithful but few prophets at the close of national life are that the burning of incense and the frivolities of the calf worship had produced oppression, injustice, luxury and social impurity, until the natural result, called the "wrath of God," was spoliation by the fierce and hardy Aramites, and later Assyrians, as the former of the two began to fall from the same causes which morally affected Israel.

Even the prophets who came again under toleration after the outbreak at the time of Jezebel, failed to testify when they stood before Ahab, to give counsel regarding the expedition to Ramoth Gilead. The favor of the king had weakened the faithfulness of the great majority of the sons of the prophets, yet shortly afterwards the prophet Elisha seems to have inspired them with new life for a time, ending, however, in the shameless sycophant, Amaziah, who denounced the courageous Amos to King Jeroboam II, but apparently without success. Jonah was probably the last of these monitors, who, while preserving his integrity, maintained himself in the king's favor. Zechariah, prophesying Israel's general, radical and final revival, declares that the rough garment worn only to deceive shall be discarded, and the office of prophet shall become so unpopular that a man's father and mother will thrust him through rather than bear the disgrace of having fostered a prophet.

The strange gods or teraphim with which the calf cult was associated, and the form of which is not positively certain, was the survival of that negative religiosity which is extant in those departures from God which find expression in modern necromancy, and in the various forms of witchcraft advertised in the Sunday papers. From first to last it is the feeling of insecurity on account of hidden malignant powers, the remains if not the survival of the ancient cult of the serpent. In modern times professedly Christian people believe that lurking behind some innocent incident, such as the placing of thirteen at a table, this malignant demon finds an opening for doing some harm to the bodies or fortune of host or guest. The teraphim not only was a concession to this negative side of devotion, but it could be used or made to disclose matters of futurity. The mascot of our day represents the teraphim in its reputed power to avert evil fortune to the possessor, and it had its sphere in predicting the good fortune it influenced, just as in our day those licensed imposters predict the best to those who pay the most, only that this scandal on modern enlightenment was not so openly mercenary in olden times — in fact a deal more respectable. The first we hear of the teraphim in the Bible, as before noted, was as a household asset in Syria, and the last of it in Israel the writer believes he traced in the story of the "Homunculus," told him by a Jew whose mind was a treasure house of tradition, or perhaps more graphically an "old curiosity shop." He said that the image of a diminutive human being had been preserved secretly by one family of Jews in a university city in Italy, where it was left unused, but kept as a curiosity. Some Jews, discouraged by the persecutions and exactions to which the race was subjected, and despairing of help from the expected and right source — for prayers seemed wholly ineffectual — deter-

mined to consult the homunculus, and called at the home in the Ghetto where it was reported to be in keeping. The master of the home becoming aware of their purpose, absented himself for a little while and then returning led them to an attic room where he showed them the fragments of the last of the teraphim. There is a kindred story of the pronunciation of the divine name which some young rabbis wished to learn, but the single possessor of the secret deeming that the purpose of the inquirers was irreverent curiosity, uttered the word so indistinctly in the part of the service where it should be pronounced, that they could not catch it as a certainty, and then the aged rabbi died before he had occasion to pronounce again the ineffable name, so the name of Israel's god is lost forever. A curious parallel to the phase of teraphim and homunculus in which the secrets of the future are in their keeping, may be traced in the traditional leprechaun of the Irish, who, at the time when the clear light of primitive Christianity beamed among them more than elsewhere in the world, still held to the belief that the unseen contained powers inimical to the people's welfare and who possessed a knowledge of the future which Christianity could not or would not supply. The leprechaun was the earthly manifestation of one of those elves who could be made to divulge one's fortunes if taken by surprise, the elves themselves as a body being the special enemies of the cattle of those whom they plagued, and of motherhood, whose offspring they carried away, substituting their own peevish and ill-thriving infants.

The first look at the winged figures of Assyria should bring to mind the visions before referred to in Ezekiel, Isaiah and Revelations; and the first thought may well be—these creations indicate a belief in demons which display not a single benevolent symbol. The man-faced creature is not the man whom we



could acknowledge and associate with; the ox with wings and an eagle's head is not the benefactor and docile servant of man. They are distorted and composite traditions of the cherub who denied mankind entrance into the place where his progenitors were happy. He was four-faced, warlike, vengeful, one to be dreaded as an antagonist to mankind. The teraphim, with its plural form and single entity, has eluded the research of all inquiry and even tradition gives no light regarding its form. It was not large, for Rachel concealed the image among the furniture of her camel, and it had some semblance to the human figure or countenance, for Michal deceived the messengers of Saul by substituting it for David as it lay on the couch. It was carried to the battlefield by Nebuchadnezzar, and its purpose made known when he consulted it regarding the course of his campaign. Zechariah says that the teraphim have foretold falsehoods, and with these particulars in mind we conclude that resort was had to the positive agent in man's welfare at Dan when men were fortunate and in thankful mood, while reverses and anxieties looked to the negative instrument. The calf in the first instance, the teraphim in the other case.

The modern scholarship asserts that before the Captivity Israel had no notion of a power antagonistic to Jehovah, while the fact is that the effort to propitiate the enemy, and to extort from him the knowledge that Jehovah concealed, or only revealed through the breastplate of the high priest, was the enemy or nullifier of the only acceptable offering that intelligence can offer to God — the mental sacrifice of faith accompanied by the heart sacrifice of penitence.















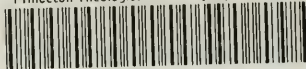




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